

## **II. Designation Report**

### **2.1 Statement of Intent**

The Intent of this Neighborhood Conservation Designation is to establish a comprehensive series of protective and incentive legislative elements including zoning overlays, zoning revisions, design guidelines and other mechanisms provided for the Lincoln Terrace and 16<sup>th</sup> Street-end neighborhood of the City of Miami Beach to be known as the Gilbert M. Fein Neighborhood Conservation District.

### **2.2 Objectives**

The purpose of establishing the Gilbert M. Fein Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD-1) is to ensure that future redevelopment within the 16<sup>th</sup> Street-end and Lincoln Terrace planned residential enclave enhances the existing residential experience of the *cul de sacs* by embracing the fundamental planning facets of this unique planned unit neighborhood. In particular, new construction projects should strive to achieve the following objectives:

- (1) Preserve the street scale on both Lincoln Terrace and 16<sup>th</sup> Street to the greatest extent possible without seriously diminishing the existing property rights.
- (2) Maintain and enhance the property values of adjacent structures through sympathetic redevelopment scenarios which do not necessitate speculative wholesale demolition.
- (3) Preserve the sense of meaningful neighborhood space between the existing buildings to the greatest extent possible.
- (4) Concentrate maximum new building height on the waterfront lots to the south to the greatest extent possible.
- (5) Create and enhance physical and visual access from Lincoln Terrace and 16<sup>th</sup> Street to the Biscayne Bay front.
- (6) Enhance the public *rights-of-way* for both 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Lincoln Terrace by facilitating the creation of a high quality landscaped pedestrian friendly neighborhood environment through the formalization of a significant street parking plan that may incorporate a limited amount of private land with the property owner's approval.

### **2.3 Effect of District Designation**

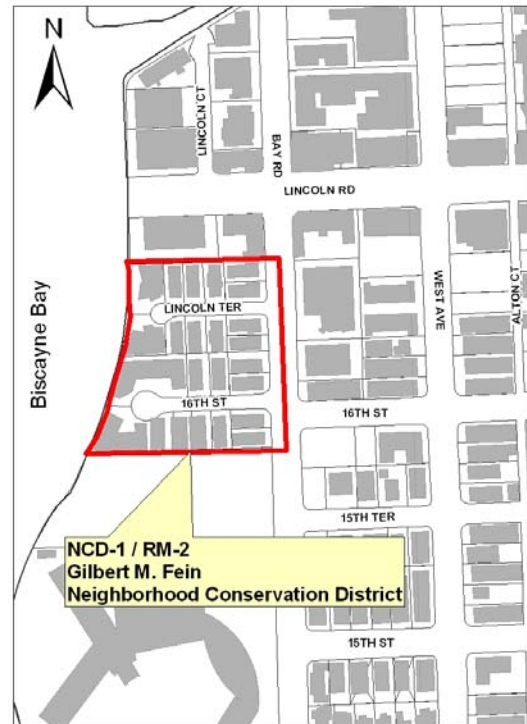
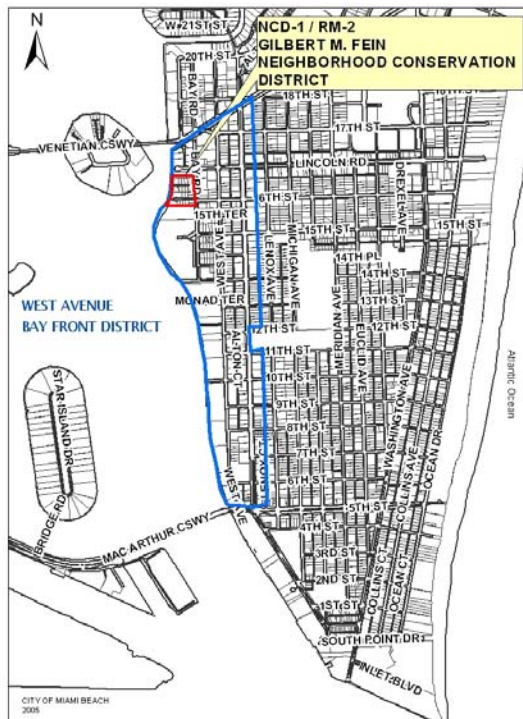
The effect of the Gilbert M. Fein district designation will be to:

- (1) Create an illustrative neighborhood master plan to accurately inform and streamline the development review process with regard to neighborhood redevelopment and improvement projects.
- (2) Modify certain aspects of the existing RM-2 zoning regulations through the NCD overlay to better address the existing conditions.
- (3) Enact district specific design guidelines to maintain the special close-knit character of the enclave and enhance the overall streetscape character.

## 2.4 Boundary Description

### (a) General Boundary Description

The Gilbert M. Fein Neighborhood Conservation District shall be bounded by the centerline of Bay Road to the east, the bulkhead line of Biscayne Bay to the west, the northern lot lines of the northern properties fronting Lincoln Terrace to the north, and the southern lot lines of the southern properties fronting 16th Street to the south.



### (b) Detailed District Boundaries

NCD-1/ RM-2: The boundaries of the Gilbert M. Fein Neighborhood Conservation District include those properties of Block 43, ALTON BEACH BAY FRONT SUBDIVISION, recorded in Plat Book 4, at page 125, Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida fronting or abutting Bay Road, Lincoln Terrace and 16<sup>th</sup> Street and commences at the point of intersection of the northern lot line of Lot 1 of the LINCOLN TERRACE SUBDIVISION, and the bulkhead line of Biscayne Bay as recorded in Plat Book 49, at page 100, Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida. Said point being the POINT OF BEGINNING of the tract(s) of land herein described; thence run easterly, along the northern lot line of Lot 1 and its easterly extension to the point of intersection with the centerline of Bay Road; thence run southerly, along the centerline of Bay Road to the point of intersection with the Easterly extension of the south lot line of Lot 15 of the BAY LINCOLN SUBDIVISION, recorded in Plat Book 58, at page 86, Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida; thence run westerly, along the south lot line of Lot 15 and its easterly extension to the point of intersection with the bulkhead line of Biscayne Bay; thence run northerly, along the bulkhead line to the POINT OF BEGINNING. Said lands located, lying and being in the City of Miami Beach, Miami-Dade County, Florida.

## 2.5 Qualification

In order for a Neighborhood Conservation District to be officially designated, the area must first satisfy one (1) of five (5) criteria. The proposed Gilbert M. Fein NCD satisfies several of the category requirements for eligibility as set forth in Section 118-704 of the NCD enabling ordinance. Of particular note is the fact that this early Post-War Modern planned residential development remains predominately intact today as it was originally conceived some fifty years ago despite the continuing robust, market driven residential and tourist environment that has come to embody the West Avenue Bay Front area. Whether the existing original enclave is able to remain substantially intact or begins to redevelop similarly to the neighboring urban environment to the south, the presence of this quaint, low scale bay front neighborhood has come to symbolize an effort to conserve certain desirable and definable residential qualities that are inherent and clearly apparent in the existing neighborhoods of the west side of south Miami Beach. Any new redevelopment within this subject district should be reflective of that urban tradition.

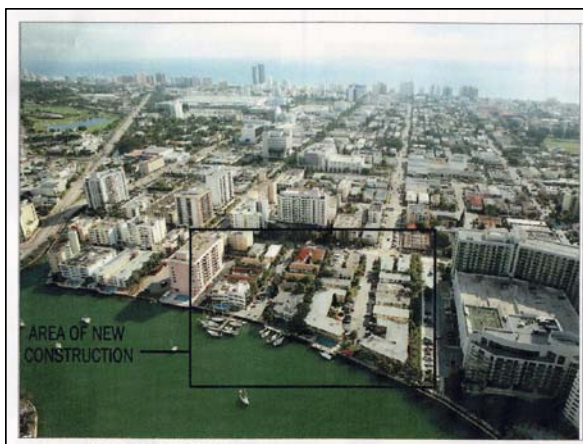
- (1) A special urban scale and context, or historic or architectural character present in the defined area;**  
**- Satisfied**

In retrospect, it is Miami Beach developer Carl Fisher (1874-1939) who may be credited as the first visionary to create a distinctive bay front image for the southern end of Miami Beach. In 1918, Fisher's Alton Beach Realty Company filed the Alton Beach Bay Front subdivision. This subdivision spanned from Lincoln Road to just south of 9<sup>th</sup> Street between Alton Road and Biscayne Bay. On the last day of 1920, Fisher opened his first major hotel, the Flamingo, at 1500 Bay Road on Biscayne Bay. Only a year after the Flamingo Hotel had opened, he added a glass dome to the top of the 11-story hotel. Illuminated at night with changing colors, it was a landmark. In addition to the hotel, Fisher also constructed a series of private cottages on the grounds.

The Flamingo Hotel with its conspicuous lighted dome helped to lure interest from mainland



*Recent view west over the district.*



*Aerial of the district looking east.*



*View of the bay front during the late 1920s.  
Carl Fisher's Flamingo Hotel at center.*



Miami across the bay to a utopian leisure environment. This opulent hotel was surrounded by private residences and cottages all set within lush tropical gardens. Fisher would later repeat this site design concept in 1923 when he constructed the Nautilus Hotel with nearby cottages just north of 41<sup>st</sup> Street on the bay. This early planning technique whereby large hotels were surrounded by low-scale garden architecture ensured expansive and desirable views from the hotels.

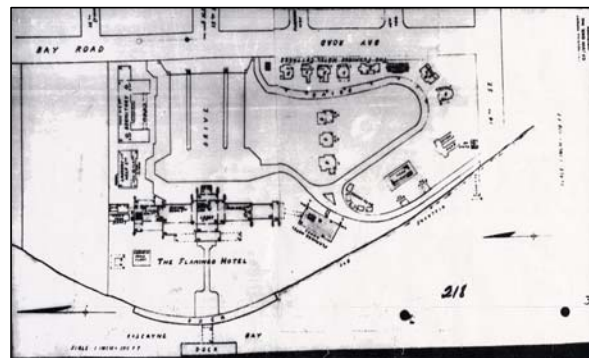
Fisher's Flamingo Hotel created a new luxurious image for Miami Beach from a mangrove jungle just years before. It was the first hotel of this size and elegance in Miami Beach. Following the Flamingo Hotel, other developers built two separate major hotels on the bay front south of Lincoln Road: the Fleetwood Hotel at 8<sup>th</sup> Street in 1924 and the Floridian Hotel slightly south of 6<sup>th</sup> Street in 1925. The guests of these three grand hotels on the bay had an excellent vantage point for Fisher's motor boat races.

Just north of the Flamingo Hotel and within the present-day Lincoln Terrace and Bay Lincoln neighborhood, Theodore Dickinson had a large single-family home constructed at 1600 Bay Road around 1922. The approximately 2.5-acre site was located on Lots 4 and 5, and the southern 5 feet of Lot 3, of Block 43, of the Alton Beach Bay Front subdivision. The property was later sold to Bertha Evans around 1932.

The area from Lincoln Road to just south of 16<sup>th</sup> Street between Bay Road and Biscayne Bay was originally zoned for single-family estates. However, by January of 1946, the owners of the vacant land on Lot 2 and the northern 112.9 feet of Lot 3, of Block 43, of the Alton Beach Bay Front subdivision petitioned the City of Miami Beach to rezone their property from single-family estate to multi-family. The City expanded the area of their request to include Lots 1 through 5 in order to give proper consideration to the classification of the surrounding property. The petitioners, Leon and Alyce Ell together with Shepard and Ruth Broad, maintained that the neighborhood had changed dramatically, and it was no longer suitable for large single-



View north of the Flamingo Hotel , circa 1920s.



1922 site plan of the Flamingo Hotel.



Miami Beach Regatta, 1928.

family estates due to nearby multi-family and commercial development. Bertha Evans, the then owner of the single-family residence at 1600 Bay Road on Lots 4 and 5, and the southern 5 feet of Lot 3, strongly opposed the rezoning of the area. She argued that the rezoning to multi-family would destroy her property value. Upon recommendation of denial from the Zoning Board of Adjustment, the City Council (now City Commission) denied the petitioners request to rezone the area on April 16, 1947.

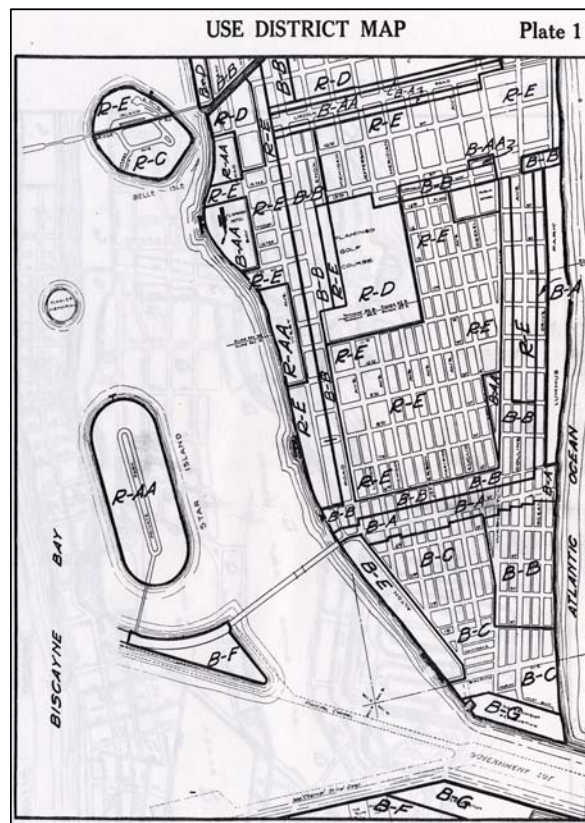
In October of 1947, Leon and Alyce Ell together with Shepard and Ruth Broad requested again that the City of Miami Beach rezone Lots 1 through 5, of Block 43, of the Alton Beach Bay Front subdivision from single-family estate to multi-family. Despite objections by Miss Evans and others, the Zoning Board of Adjustment recommended to the City Council to approve the rezoning of Lots 2 through 5 (Lot 1 was excluded) from single-family estate to multi-family because of the changing conditions in the area. It was approved by the City Council on May 19, 1948.

Two years after the area was rezoned, John Myers and Abraham Lefkowitz of the Lincoln-Bay Corporation submitted a permit application to the Building Department. They proposed to replat Lot 2 and the northern 112.9 feet of Lot 3, Block 43, of the Alton Beach Bay Front subdivision into 12 small lots and to build 12 small, low-scale apartment houses on a new cul-de-sac street (Lincoln Terrace). The Building Department initially denied the permit application because the project did not conform to the multi-family setbacks in place at the time. Only upon appeal did the Zoning Board of Adjustment on February 6, 1950, grant setback variances for the construction of the Lincoln Terrace Villas. On March 15, 1950, the City Council approved the resubdivision of Lot 2 and the northern 112.9 feet of Lot 3. The Lincoln-Bay Corporation filed for record the Lincoln Terrace subdivision on April 5, 1950.

In 1954, a permit application by Allen Goldberg, Charles Weinberg, and Colonel N. Rood of the Bay Lincoln Corporation was submitted to the Building Department. They proposed to replat Lots 4 and 5, and the southern 5 feet of Lot 3, of



*Bay front estates as viewed north from the Flamingo Hotel.*



*As seen in this map from the 1930 Zoning Ordinance, the present day Fein District was originally zoned single-family estate.*



Block 43, of the Alton Beach Bay Front subdivision into 15 small lots and to build low-scale apartment houses on a new cul-de-sac street (the western extension of 16<sup>th</sup> Street). (The Bay Lincoln Corporation purchased the property at 1600 Bay Road from Bertha Evans around this time.) Similar to the Lincoln Terrace Villas project, the application was initially denied by the Building Department because the project did not conform to the multi-family setbacks then in place. Upon appeal, the Zoning Board of Adjustment granted the setback variances for the construction of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Bay Lincoln Development on February 12, 1954 (revised May 7, 1954). The City Council approved the resubdivision of Lots 4 and 5, and the southern 5 feet of Lot 3, on June 16, 1954. Attorney Irving Nathanson, as trustee, filed for record the Bay Lincoln subdivision on June 30, 1954.

In May of 1954, a permit was issued by the City for the demolition of the single-family residence at 1600 Bay Road (Lots 4 and 5, and the southern 5 feet of Lot 3). Today the only remaining traces of the former estate are two coral rock walls located on the northern and southern lot lines of the property and within the boundaries of the district.

Between 1950 and 1956, there were 24 apartment houses constructed within the Lincoln Terrace and Bay Lincoln subdivisions. Of these 24 structures, 18 were designed by Gilbert M. Fein, three by Maurice S. Weintraub, two by Robert M. Nordin, and one by Igor B. Polevitzky. All of these buildings were designed in the Post War Modern or Miami Modern (MiMo) style of architecture.

The Lincoln Terrace Villas and the later 16<sup>th</sup> Street Bay Lincoln Development, both designed by architect Gilbert M. Fein, are noteworthy in terms of their contribution to the legacy of Miami Beach residential architecture. They represent an early example of an evolving post-war 1950s residential typology in Miami Beach in which the success of increasingly dense PUDs relied on the creation of semi-private outdoor garden space directly adjacent and accessible to each dwelling unit. In this regard, the Lincoln Terrace Villas neighborhood plan of 1950, which



*Architect's rendering of the Lincoln Terrace Villas, Miami News, 1950.*



*Coral rock wall existing from the former single-family estate.*



*Aerial atlas photo of the district, 1959.*

consisted of a simple pairing of open porch structures facing each other across tropically landscaped courts, was a predecessor to the later proscenium and catwalk garden style apartments characteristic of the celebrated Miami Modern (MiMo) style.

So too is the architect of this early post-war PUD noteworthy, as Mr. Fein may be credited with being a true master of the new architectural movement, designing some 800 buildings citywide and over 10 percent of all buildings in North Beach. In fact, in addition to Mr. Fein designing 18 of the 24 buildings of the subject two bay front cul-de-sacs, he also designed the neighborhood plan itself with its landscaped side courts and promenade walks. It is for this reason that this bay front neighborhood is proposed to be named in his honor.

**(2) Natural or historic landscape features such as water features, golf course and/or open space areas, public or private landscape themes prevalent in the area;  
- Satisfied**

Further contemplation of the area suggests that the urban planning inspiration for the Lincoln Terrace and 16<sup>th</sup> Street Bay Lincoln neighborhood may be traced back to the *Neighborhood Unit Concept* as proposed in the writings of Clarence Perry in the late 1920s and 1930s. Perry felt that the natural and landscape benefits commonly associated with the planning of single-family neighborhoods should be brought to all levels of the urban dweller in the hope of assuring neighborly social relationships. In this regard, the redevelopment of single-family waterfront estates into a multi-family waterfront district may be directly associated with the Neighborhood Unit Concept.

Biscayne Bay, arguably the second most valuable natural resource in Miami Beach after the ocean, provides the stage for some of the most stunning views associated with Miami: its aquatic experience, skyline, and sunsets. The bay is the signature feature of Miami Beach's west side, and undoubtedly the focus of the Lincoln Terrace and 16<sup>th</sup> Street Bay Lincoln neighborhood plan. In fact, the planned



*Architectural rendering of 1491 Lincoln Terrace by Igor Polevitzky, built in 1950.*



*View of shared side courtyards, Lincoln Terrace, 2002.*



*Post-War Modern/Garden Style Apartment with proscenium entrance feature, Gilbert M. Fein, Architect.*



residential community was designed along two cul-de-sacs oriented perpendicular to the shoreline, providing desirable view corridors to the Bay from the streets and villas. (In this instance, *villas* is defined as a semi-detached urban residence with a yard and garden space.) This design premise once again strengthens the notion that new apartment neighborhoods and multi-family communities designed to take advantage of major natural landscape features might better foster and solidify healthy social interaction in the urban environment. Furthermore, the bay front properties and their proximity to Lincoln Road identified the neighborhood as a select opportunity to experience an “in town” waterfront lifestyle. A ***Miami News*** article, dated April 24, 1950, regarding the Lincoln Terrace Villas states, “A colorfully tiled kidney shaped pool, overlooking the bay is a unique feature of the villas. A spacious lounge dock fronts the bay for over 50 feet and extends into the water for 25 feet.” Intended for the enjoyment of all tenants, the bay front and its recreational amenities were marketed as a highly desirable aspect of the planned community.

- (3) ***Specialized commerce. For example, a concentration of residential office, gallery or design districts, or specific economic development objectives;***  
- Not Applicable
- (4) ***A unique development plan that is specifically noteworthy for its design concept and because it serves the community in some qualitative way;***  
- Satisfied

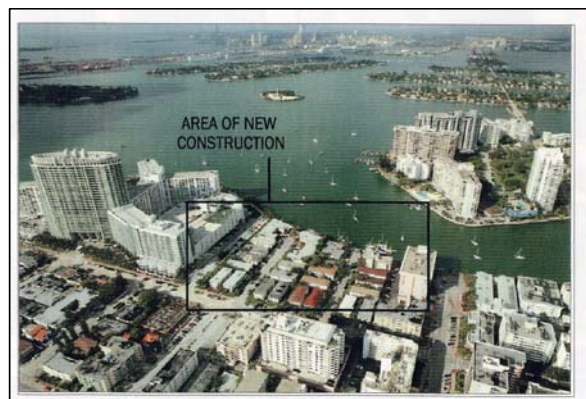
More than any other single factor, it is the extremely coherent neighborhood plan designed by Gilbert M. Fein for these two developments which defines the district and its intimate low-scale residential character. As noted earlier, the ideology of planned multi-family communities had long been in the psyche of the mainstream American planning disciplines through the writings of Clarence Perry. In works such as ***Housing for the Machine Age***, published in 1939, Perry notes that new multi-family dwellings need to be set in



*View west along Lincoln Terrace.*



*View to Biscayne Bay from 1470 16<sup>th</sup> Street.*



*Aerial of the district looking west.*



a suitable environment for the proper development of family life, and that apartment houses can create neighborliness through a relationship with usable outdoor space. The Neighborhood Unit Concept was conceived as a new plan for apartment living where convenient accessibility to a common environmental amenity would assure neighborly social relationship. Gilbert Fein's plan for the Villas was designed to embody many of the tenets of social equality. As stated in the ***Miami News*** article regarding the economics of ownership within the Villas, *"The buildings, including property, will be available for purchase individually. The buyer would become a stockholder in the corporation which will own the swimming pool and cabana club."* Although conceived with an almost socialist tone reminiscent of Perry's Depression-era Neighborhood Unit Concept and strangely evocative of an early cooperative housing technique, the major impetus for projects such as Gilbert Fein's Villas was to provide decent housing that was modern and economical at a time when it was desperately needed as a result of the post-World War II era housing shortage.

Finally, the ***Miami News*** article further states, *"Everything has been planned for indoor comfort and outdoor relaxation. Tropically landscaped promenade walks will stretch between the buildings to give maximum space, privacy and ventilation to all apartments."* More than any other feature of the existing neighborhood, which remains predominately intact today as it was initially built, it is the spirit of a low-scale multi-family apartment unit development, laid out in a simple, pure orthogonal plan around gardens and the bay front that is of great significance and merit to the enduring residential experience of Miami Beach.

- (5) **Other cultural or significant features such as monuments, notable infrastructure improvements, or special public amenities that directly contribute to the aesthetic character and quality of life of a community;**  
 - **Not Applicable, however, see qualification #2.**



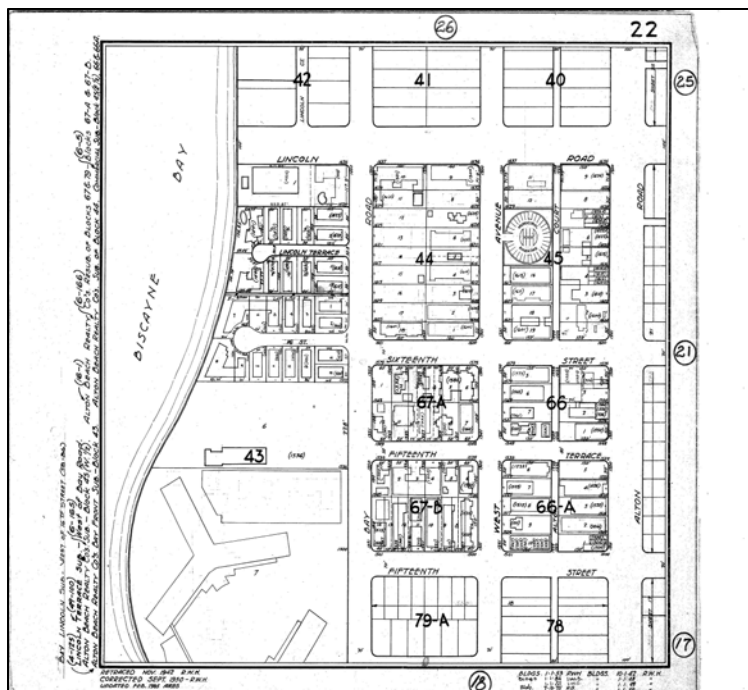
*View of shared side courtyards, Lincoln Terrace.*



*Lincoln Terrace is characterized by a narrow street cross section and low-scale architecture.*



*1451 Lincoln Terrace*



Current City atlas and aerial photo of the district, 2002, 2000.